News release

2004: Another warm year

16 December 2004

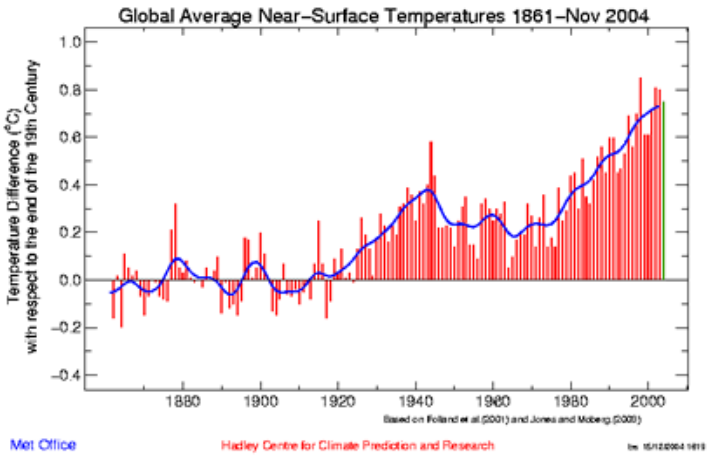
Fourth warmest year globally - fifth warmest for England

Figures compiled by the Met Office and the University of East Anglia (UEA) for the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) reveal that 2004 has been the fourth warmest year globally since records began in 1861.

Global mean surface temperature over land and sea was 0.44 °C above the 1961-1990 average; for land areas alone, it was even warmer at 0.67 °C above the average. The last ten years has seen nine of the ten warmest years on record, with only 1996 not making the top ten.

Phil Jones of the Climatic Research Unit at the UEA said: "That nine of the ten warmest years on record have occurred in the last decade is truly remarkable."

Met Office climate scientist David Parker added: "Average global temperature has risen by around 0.7 °C since the end of the 19th century and it is very likely that the warming over the past 50 years is mainly due to human activities, such as the burning of fossil fuels."



Closer to home, this year is ranked the fifth warmest in the Central England Temperature series which dates back to 1659, with a temperature 1.08 °C warmer than average so far. The warmer years were 1949, 1990, 1999 and 2002, which all recorded temperatures between 1.1 °C and 1.2 °C above the long-term average.

The Met Office has developed a computer model to predict annual global temperature, and its forecast for 2004 was within the expected range. The prediction for 2005 is within the range 0.39 °C to 0.63 °C with a best estimate of 0.51 °C, which would make it the second warmest on record.

Notes to editors:
1. Graphs representing global, northern hemisphere and southern hemisphere temperatures are available on request.

2. These global statistics are compiled using data from land and sea, which have been analysed by the Met Office and the University of East Anglia. With part of December 2004 remaining, all figures contained in the news release are provisional. However, the global temperature ranking relative to other years is unlikely to change.

3. The period over which averages have been calculated is 1961-90.

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